

VZCZCXRO1214
PP RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEHKI #0337/01 0801225
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 211225Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5826
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000337

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/21/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KPKO](#) [ASEC](#) [CG](#)
SUBJECT: MINEMBWE UPDATE: DISSIDENT GROUPS PREPARING FOR
INTEGRATION AS MASUNZU LEAVES HIGH PLATEAU

REF: A. KINSHASA 126
[1](#)B. KINSHASA 184

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Two dissident ethnic Banyamulenge commanders have agreed to integrate their troops with other Congolese military (FARDC) units following weeks of controversial negotiations with former associates of renegade General Laurent Nkunda and FARDC commanders. MONUC officials report there is confusion over how these soldiers will be integrated and what exactly they were promised. The dissidents' decision comes after fellow Munyamulenge FARDC General Patrick Masunzu, who fought their forces in January in Minembwe, South Kivu, departed the High Plateau for the provincial capital Bukavu. End summary.

BISOGO, RUKUNDA AGREE TO INTEGRATE FORCES

[1](#)2. (C) Leaders of two dissident groups of ethnic Banyamulenge (a Congolese Tutsi sub-group) FARDC soldiers in South Kivu's Minembwe region have agreed to send their forces for military integration. Col. Venant Bisogo and Maj. ichel Rukunda, who respectively lead the so-called Group of 47 and the Moramvia Group, announced arch 10 their willingness to surrender and assemble at a provincial military integration center. Thimpanga Matala, an adviser to former vice president Azarias Ruberwa, who is close to Bisogo, told us March 15 that Bisogo and Rukunda had agreed to integrate their forces into the FARDC and were currently departing from their bases. MONUC-Bukavu Head of Office Alpha Sow confirmed March 19 that approximately 120 troops from both groups had arrived by March 17 in Kitobo just north of Minembwe. Bisogo and Rukunda combined are believed to command about 350 soldiers.

CONTROVERSIAL NEGOTIATORS

[1](#)3. (C) The agreement by Bisogo and Rukunda follows several weeks of negotiations with former Nkunda officers Eric Ruhimbere and Elie Gichondo. The FARDC's leadership apparently recruited them and other ethnic Tutsi officers to conduct a "sensitization" mission in Minembwe aimed at convincing the dissident groups to surrender. Their arrival in Bukavu in late February set off a wave of concern among the local population, as the two had participated with Nkunda and Col. Jules Mutebusi in the 2004 take-over of the city. Ruhimbere was also accompanied at one point by Jean-Pierre Biyoyo, a former FARDC commander who had been imprisoned in March 2006 for recruiting child soldiers but escaped three

months later. Biyoyo was reportedly wearing a FARDC uniform and had been promoted to lieutenant colonel.

14. (C) The question of who authorized Ruhimbere's participation remains unanswered. New South Kivu Governor Celestin Cibalanza said in media interviews he did not know who had done so and publicly demanded Ruhimbere's departure from the province. FARDC 10th Military Region (South Kivu) commander General Sylvain Tshikwey said he was unaware of the mission, although the FARDC eventually provided Ruhimbere and his delegation with transportation to Minembwe after they had been forced to return to Goma, North Kivu. Sow said it was most likely FARDC Land Forces Commander General Gabriel Amisi, who has been in the region frequently the past few months, who arranged Ruhimbere's involvement.

CONFUSION ON WHAT WAS PROMISED

15. (C) Sow and other MONUC officials said it is not clear what exactly was promised to the dissident forces. There is even some confusion among the troops. Sow told us Amisi and Ruhimbere reportedly pledged to Bisogo and Rukunda that their men would undergo "mixage," as opposed to "brassage." The difference between the two is more than semantics. "Brassage," part of the DRC's official military integration system, is the process by which non-integrated forces are separated from their former commanders, assembled into new units with non-integrated forces from other brigades or former belligerent groups, and deployed to a region outside their usual zone of operations. The object is to break up separate chains of command and create a unified national

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army. "Mixage," on the other hand, combines various military units into new brigades, but does not necessarily separate soldiers from their former commanders or send them to different areas. The "mixage" process, agreed to in a December ceasefire between the GDRC and Nkunda (and originally envisioned as a stop-gap measure), is currently underway in North Kivu province and has of mid-March created three "mixed" brigades.

16. (C) MONUC-Uvira Political Officer Hunter Fraser, who has been in touch with Bisogo and Rukunda during the negotiations, told us the dissident leaders contend they are sending their forces only for "mixage." Sow told us General Tshikwey is strongly opposed to "mixage" and has insisted the

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dissidents go through "brassage" only. He added that a small group of dissidents has gone to Runingu (about 12 miles north of Uvira) to discuss this issue with FARDC and government integration authorities.

MASUNZU LEAVES HIGH PLATEAU

17. (C) Bisogo and Rukunda conditioned their decision to integrate on the departure of fellow Munyamulenge General Patrick Masunzu from the High Plateau, which he did March 12. South Kivu politician and fellow Munyamulenge Enoch Sebinez, Rukunda's political patron, said the two feared the general would attack them if they left their bases, and claimed Masunzu was the source of the area's insecurity. Masunzu, who commands the FARDC's non-integrated 112th Brigade and is closely associated with President Kabila, had engaged the dissidents in a series of low-level clashes in the Minembwe area for months, most recently in late January (ref A). After that fighting, MONUC and FARDC commanders initiated separate negotiations with Masunzu to convince him to send his troops for integration. Masunzu sent a first group of about 200 for integration in mid-February (ref B). Approximately 200 others remain in Minembwe; FARDC commanders from the 10th Military

Region will oversee their integration in Masunzu's absence. Masunzu is currently in Bukavu "on leave."

¶8. (C) Sow said Masunzu conditioned his departure from the region on the establishment of greater security measures in Minembwe, including the presence of MONUC peacekeepers. MONUC deployed a mobile operating base of several dozen Pakistani peacekeepers to the region March 10. In addition, two battalions of the FARDC 12th Integrated Brigade were sent to replace non-integrated elements of the 112th and the Bisogo and Rukunda groups.

COMMENT: WEAKENING MILITARY INTEGRATION

¶9. (C) Bisogo and Rukunda are likely advocating "mixage" for the same reason as Nkunda: to defend both their personal interests and the "interests" of the Tutsi population in their respective provinces. They have no doubt witnessed the growing influence of the dissident general in North Kivu as a result of "mixage," which was intended as a short-term solution to North Kivu's security problems, and are seeking the same deal from the GDRC. If this truly is the plan for the dissident forces, the consequence will be a further weakening of the military integration process as "mixage" fails to break up ethnically homogenous units. End comment.

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